



Arts Engagement
and Education

BENEDICK

“O, she misused me past the endurance of a block!”

from *Much Ado About Nothing*

by William Shakespeare: <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk>

Gender: Male/Male Presenting

Style: Classical Comedic

Age Range: Mid 20s-30s

Link to buy Script: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com>

Play Synopsis

The action of *Much Ado About Nothing* occurs during several days of a visit by Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, and his followers at the large estate of Leonato, Governor of Messina. Don Pedro has been victorious in a small war against his own half-brother, Don John, who has now (reluctantly) joined him.

From the beginning to the end of the play, two love stories are intertwined. One story follows the formal, romantic relationship between Leonato's daughter, Hero (a young woman), and Claudio (a young officer): Claudio realizes, after returning from war, that he is deeply in love with Hero and wants to ask her father for permission to marry her. His commander, Don Pedro, helps Claudio propose marriage, with some momentary confusion about who the suitor is — Don Pedro or Claudio.

The other couple, Beatrice (Hero's cousin) and Benedick (another officer), work hard to give the impression that neither is the least bit interested in the other, still smarting over bad experiences in earlier encounters with one another. From the beginning of the play, Beatrice and Benedick tease and insult one another mercilessly and repeatedly deny that they will ever marry anyone, let alone marry one another. However, the audience can tell almost immediately that they don't entirely believe their own disclaimers. Their friends arrange for them to overhear conversations revealing how much each is loved by the other.

Before this scene:

The main characters are at a Masquerade ball where Benedick ends up with Beatrice, who pretends not to recognize him behind his mask. She insists Benedick is "the Prince's jester, a very dull fool" while the masked Benedick pretends not to know about whom she is speaking. Shortly after, their dance ends. Tired of her insults, Benedick erupts with frustration to the other men in the group.

Monologue(Act II, Scene 1):

O, she misused me past the endurance of a block!
an oak but with one green leaf on it would have
answered her; my very visor began to assume life and
scold with her. She told me, not thinking I had been
myself, that I was the prince's jester, that I was
duller than a great thaw; huddling jest upon jest
with such impossible conveyance upon me that I stood
like a man at a mark, with a whole army shooting at
me. She speaks poniards, and every word stabs:
if her breath were as terrible as her terminations,

there were no living near her; she would infect to the north star. I would not marry her, though she were endowed with all that Adam had left him before he transgressed: she would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and have cleft his club to make the fire too. Come, talk not of her: you shall find her the infernal Ate in good apparel. I would to God some scholar would conjure her; for certainly, while she is here, a man may live as quiet in hell as in a sanctuary; and people sin upon purpose, because they would go thither; so, indeed, all disquiet, horror and perturbation follows her.

Helpful Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTvm1manxXQ>